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OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Bay Saint Louis, Mississippi

March 2008

COMING EVENTS AT LOBRANO HOUSE

The March luncheon meeting will be held on Thursday, March 20, 2008, at noon at the Kate Lobrano House. The speaker will be Dr. Myron C. Noonkester, Dean of the Ralph and Naomi Noonkester School of Arts and Letters and Co-Director of the Center for Study of the Life and Work of William Carey, D. D., at William Carey University in Hattiesburg. Dr. Noonkester will speak on the William Carey Institute and the life of William Carey. Reservations may be made by calling 467-4090. Please call by noon on Wednesday, March 19, to assure your reservation and to help us plan seating which is limited to forty-five people. The price of the lunch is \$7.00.



MEMBERSHIP FEES

Thank you to all of you who have sent in your dues. Please double check your address label for the expiration date, and if you find an error, please let us know because we've had a minor computer glitch and some information may not be current.



This is the home Captain Sam Favre built in the Kiln in the 1800's. It is still in the Favre family.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE KILN

By
Eddie Coleman

Prior to the early 1910's the area we know as Kiln or "The Kiln" was referred to as the Jourdan River Community. However, since at least the 1880's, it has been known as Kiln because of the kilns once located there and used for the production of pine tar. By 1913 the name *Kiln* was firmly established.

The earliest inhabitants

of the area were Choctaw and Muskhogean Indians, who lived along the banks of a river (later named the Jourdan) emptying into the Bay of Saint Louis. These tribes hunted, fished, and trapped on this land prior to the settlement by the French who moved into the area in the late 1700's.

The first white settlers in the Kiln Community whom we know by name were Jean Baptiste Nicaize (Necaise) and his family. It is likely they moved from the Wolf River area (Delisle) to Kiln and acquired the J. B. Necaise claim under a Spanish land grant around 1800 or before. There is a

THE
HISTORIAN
 OF HANCOCK COUNTY

Eddie Coleman, Editor
 Linda-Lou Nelson, Publisher

Published monthly by the
HANCOCK COUNTY
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"TO PRESERVE THE GENERAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY OF HANCOCK COUNTY AND TO PRESERVE THE KATE LOBRANO HOUSE AND COLLECTIONS THEREIN; TO RESEARCH AND INTERPRET LIFE IN HANCOCK COUNTY; AND TO ENCOURAGE AN APPRECIATION OF AND INTEREST IN HISTORICAL PRESERVATION."

record of a marriage on May 11, 1745, of Jean Baptiste Nicaize to Marie Catherine Miot (Meaut) in the Wolf River area. This record also noted that the father of J. B. Necaise was a native of Paris, France. A daughter, Marie Jeanne, was born to this union on December 22, 1749.

The Jourdan River received its name from Noel Jourdan, an early settler on the river, who had received a Spanish Land Grant at the present site of Diamondhead. He later served as a delegate to the Mississippi Constitutional Convention of 1817, and he was the first representative of Hancock County in the Mississippi Legislature.

The first census of the area was taken in 1840 by John McCaughan, Enumerator, who before that time was U. S. Custom Collector for the town of Shieldsborough (Bay Saint Louis). Later, he became the first postmaster of Biloxi. Also, during the 1840's the community of Jourdan River had a prosperous business in the production of

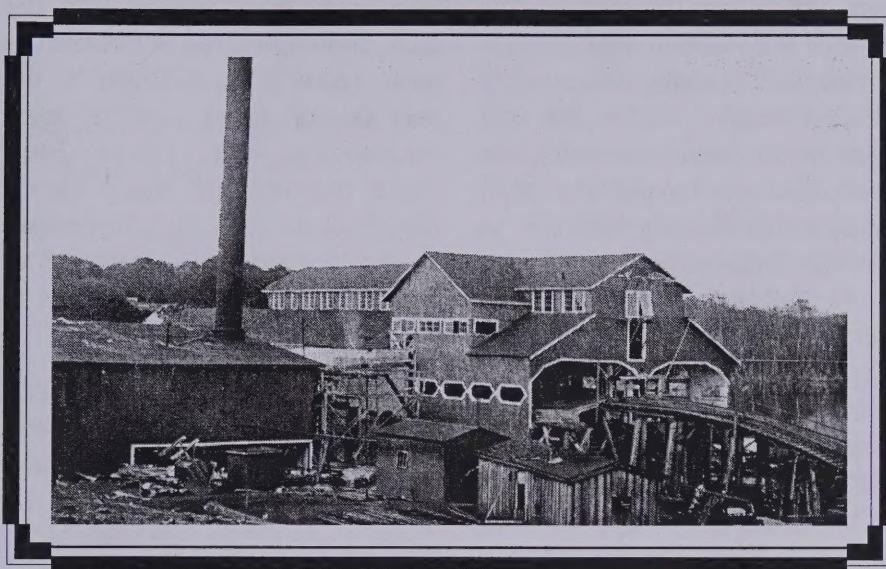
charcoal, which it sold on the New Orleans market.

Around the time of the Civil War, the sawmill era began when a mill was built on the Jourdan River by Capt. Sam Favre of Mobile, Alabama. He also built a home on the Jourdan River in 1859. Later this house was moved to its present location near Annunciation Catholic Church and is currently owned by one of his descendants. It is considered the oldest house in the Kiln.

Francois Haas from New Orleans built a sawmill on Bayou Talla in the Kiln area. After the Civil War Capt. Favre moved to the Logtown and Napoleon areas, and the Francois Haas sawmill was operated by Elisha Haas and Timothy Herlihy. Later the mill became known as the Herlihy and Haas mill. The next sawmill in Kiln was operated by Emilio Cue, who became the first postmaster at Kiln on January 31, 1887. In 1906 Cue sold his sawmill to Herlihy and Haas who operated



Charcoal kiln



Jordan River Lumber Company's Sawmill

this mill as well as the other one they owned on Bayou Talla. However, in 1909 W. W. Carre & Co., Ltd., of New Orleans bought the Herlihy and Hass operation. Carre sold the company to the Edward Hines Company who operated the sawmill until it closed in 1933.

During this era there were other industries set up in the Kiln because of water transportation on the Jourdan and the vast virgin forests to the north. Willie Curet operated a shipyard on the Jourdan, Jeremiah Haas operated another shipyard on Bayou Talla, and Salvadore Necessaire operated a shingle mill. These family names are familiar in the area, and descendants of these men live in Hancock County today.

In one of his books, S. G. Thigpen said, "By 1913 Kiln [had grown] into one of the best small towns in the state, and was, for a time, the busiest town between Hattiesburg and New Orleans." Businesses included a

company store, a forty-five room hotel with a reputable restaurant, a small hospital with round-the-clock doctor and nurse, a movie theater, and a drug store. In addition, there were a high school and several churches in the area. The town

Naval stores is a "term initially applied to the cordage, mask, resin, tar, and timber used in building wooden sailing ships; it now designates the products obtained from the pine tree, e.g. pine oil, pitch, rosin, tar, and turpentine. These products fall into two classes, those obtained from living pines and those from dead pines. Most of the naval stores used in the world are produced in the SE United States and in S Europe. Naval stores are now used largely in the manufacture of soap, paint, varnish, shoe polish, lubricants, linoleum, and roofing material."

—*The Columbia Encyclopedia, Sixth Edition, 2007 via the internet*

also boasted a semi-pro baseball team!

Prior to the sawmill era, co-existing with it, and then succeeding it, tar kilns operated in this section of Hancock County to produce pine tar used in the calking of ships. The great local timber supply in the area was perfect for this industry known as naval stores, or the turpentine business. The natural gum was tapped from the living pine trees and manufactured into turpentine and resin by plants called turpentine stills. A large plant was built near Kiln on the Jourdan River. It was owned and operated by A. J. McLeod. His wife Virginia and their nephew Norton Haas continued its operation into the 1950's. The product was shipped by schooner and later by power boat down the Jourdan to New Orleans and Mobile.

However, local legend tells us that timber was not the only profitable business in the Kiln. It seems that with the Stock Market Crash of 1929 and the Depression of the 1930's, some residents of Kiln resorted to making illegal whiskey. Because of the high quality and ready availability of this whiskey, Kiln became known as the "Moonshine Capital of the World." Historian S. G. Thigpen wrote that the Colonial Sugar Company's customers bought literally tons of sugar for the manufacture of illegal whiskey. "It was said that an average of \$4000 worth of sugar a week was sold by a small local merchant."

Stories also abound that gangster Al Capone purchased a fleet of boats called "rum run-

ners" to transport whiskey to Chicago. These boats smuggled imported foreign liquor from ships anchored beyond the ten-mile territorial limit of the United States. Once spirits were acquired, these rum runners dashed into the Bay of Saint Louis and up the Jourdan River to areas near those which later became Darwood on the Jourdan and Holly Bluff Gardens. From here the liquor was trucked to Chicago.

Another anecdote recounts that at designated times truckloads of whiskey, guarded by Capone's armed men, traveled the road now named Kiln-Delisle. Locals tell of the collapse of the Bayou LaTerre bridge under one of Capone's overloaded vehicles. One Jourdan River homeowner, a confederate of Capone, signaled Capone's boats from a dormer window. One light meant clear sailing; two meant the Revenuers were in nearby waters.

As mentioned earlier, Emilio Cue was appointed the first postmaster at the Kiln. The

post office was located on the bank of the Jourdan near the Cue lumberyard to make it accessible to river traffic. After the collapse of the lumber industry, the post office was moved to a small room inside Curet's Grocery on the Kiln-Delisle Road.

Public education of both races was not ignored in the Kiln. The school for black children was a one-room building which was located on Highway 603. [Editor's note: I think this building still stands.] Miss Maude Sylvest was the school's first teacher. A two story consolidated school for whites was built on Bayou Talla in 1903, but was replaced by the Kiln Consolidated School formed by Nicaise, McLeod, Fenton, Silver Hill, and Bayou Talla. This building still stands on Kiln-Delisle Road. Today all students attend classes together within the Hancock County School System.

The Kiln has changed a great deal since its days as a booming mill town. Many new

businesses have moved into the area, and commerce is flourishing once again. In addition, in the past several years positive press surrounding Kiln native Brett Favre has brought many Green Bay Packers fans on pilgrimages to the community especially to the Broke Spoke. Even before

(Continued on p. 7)

BOOKS FOR SALE AT LOBRANO HOUSE

Bay Saint Louis: Celebrating the First 300 Years
By the HCHS (\$15.00)

A nostalgic keepsake of the city's history including descriptions and pictures of many of the historic buildings and houses especially those along Beach Boulevard prior to Katrina

Heritage Cookbook
By the HCHS (\$15.00)
A collection of our members' favorite family recipes

Holly
By Paul La Violette (\$20.00)
An intriguing anthology of tales of a tomcat living in a beach house on the Gulf Coast

Katrina Cookbook
By Charlet Russell (\$19.95)
A collection of recipes by Bayou Tours

Mississippi's No-Man's Land
By Marco Giardino, Ph.D., and Russell Guerin (\$10.95)
A collection of letters of the Koch family, early settlers of Hancock County

One Dog, Two Dogs, Three Dogs, Four...
By Paul La Violette (\$20.00)
Twice told tales of several dogs living in a beach house on the Gulf Coast

Sink or Be Sunk
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Kiln Hotel

**The Church
of the Annunciation
Kiln, Mississippi**

By
Scott Bagley

This is the third in a series of articles about historic churches of Hancock County. This month we move out into the county and take a look at the Church of the Annunciation located on the Kiln-Delisle Road in Kiln.

I must begin with a disclaimer. In reviewing the various rather sketchy sources for this article, I found conflicting dates and names. Accordingly, some readers may find themselves in disagreement with certain facts reported herein. If that be the case, I

urge them to contact the Historical Society and report the disputed fact and, if validated, a correction will be printed in a future edition of this newsletter.

The community of Kiln was formerly known simply as the Jourdan River Settlement because of its location on the Jourdan River about fifteen miles from what is now Bay St. Louis. This area is likely one of the oldest Catholic settlements in this part of the state of Mississippi. The early missionaries to this area were mostly Jesuits who resided either in Mobile or New Orleans. The earliest records pertaining to this settlement are to be found in the Cathedrals of Mobile, New Orleans, and Biloxi.

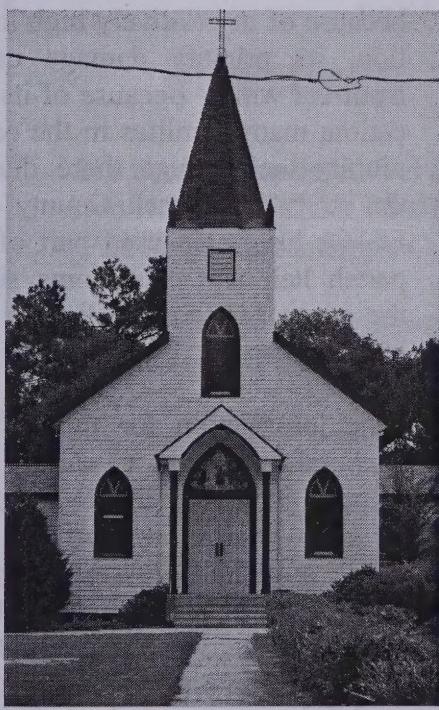
After its establishment and when the Diocese of Natchez had sufficient priests, Bishop Chanche, on July 31, 1847, requested that Father Louis Buteaux take charge of the Jourdan River, Pearl River, Wolf River, and Pass Christian settlements as missions of Shieldsboro, as Bay St. Louis was formerly known. Father H. LeDuc succeeded Father Buteaux who regularly visited the Jourdan River settlement area as best he could. The trips were made by boat or on horseback. His annual report in 1860, indicates that the Jourdan River mission was attended by him once every six weeks and that a chapel was being constructed. At this time the Catholic population amounted to about three hundred with a slightly lesser number scattered around the outlying territory.

In 1869, Father H.A. De-

Morangies arrived and began assisting Father LeDuc and soon thereafter took charge of the settlement at Jourdan River and its missions. In writing to the bishop in 1870 Father LeDuc said, "Father Demorangies is well and doing his best; he travels continually in the rivers (i.e., Jourdan River, Pearl River, and the Wolf River, this territory being known as 'The Rivers,' or 'Three Rivers')...the congregation is so poor, the dear Father has now a good horse."

Also in 1870 a new school building opened its doors on the Jourdan River followed soon thereafter by a church building allowing for further organization of the spiritual and material foundations of the area. In 1871 Father Demorangies left for another church in Holly Springs. An elderly priest by the name of Father Florient succeeded him for some months when, forced by ill health, he resigned and Father LeDuc resumed the responsibility of attending the missions until the arrival of a resident priest at Jourdan River.

When Father Schmitt arrived about 1880, he conducted the first Catholic School (St. Mary's) in the Jourdan River community, serving as its headmaster and using the church building as a schoolroom. Records reflect that initial attendance was eleven boys and seventeen girls. The school, however, was short lived as it was demolished to make room for a new church building, called Annunciation Church, that built and dedicated on almost the same site in 1886. It is believed that this church may well be the majority



The Church of the Annunciation
Kiln, MS

of the present day structure.

In the years following , there seemed to be quite a turnover of priests. It was not until the year 1891, when Father Henry Mortier was appointed to take charge of Annunciation and its missions, that he was referred to as "Pastor" for the parish. He, like his predecessors, was responsible for multiple missions throughout the northern and western parts of Hancock County.

Around 1900 Father Chauvin began his term as pastor and remained until 1919 when Father A.C. Denis assumed responsibilities as pastor. Father Denis, born in Liege, Belgium, was remembered by many parishioners as a man who lived a very frugal lifestyle, enduring many lean years during the Depression. He traveled to the mission churches in his Model T-Ford and apparently never quite mastered the English language. Father Denis served the

church until 1947, when the Divine Word Missionaries, S.V.D., from St. Augustine Seminary in Bay St. Louis, took over attending to the parish. Shortly afterward, the Trinitarian order of priests took over administration of the parish.

In 1963 Annunciation School was established with the help of Sisters from an order associated with the Trinitarians called the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity. By 1974 Annunciation School had as many as 188 students with a faculty of four Sisters and four lay teachers. The school continued to operate until 1984 when declining enrollment and financial problems brought about its closure.

Aside from some minor renovation in the 1960's, the most significant renovation to Annunciation Church occurred in 1985 when side wings were added to accommodate a growing congre-



The garden of the Church

gation. That same year the church was also completely redone inside and out.

Today Annunciation Church, under the pastorate of Father John Noone, serves 341 families in the area. Hurricane Katrina took its toll on Annunciation, but, because of its relatively high location, its primary damage came from the wind. Because of its location, many families in the community took refuge there during the storm. Hancock County and FEMA have also used part of its parish hall and classrooms since the storm for various disaster related offices.



Stained glass window above the entrance to
The Church of the Annunciation

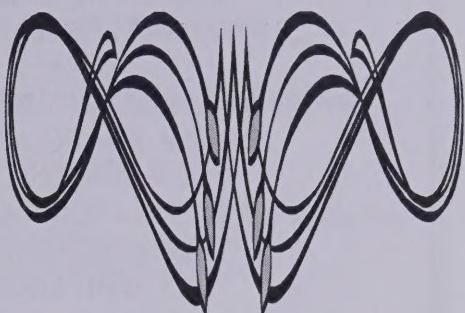
(The information for this article was taken from a variety of sources including the *Sea Coast Echo*, *Catholic Action of the South*, and *The Concise History of Annunciation Parish* by Father Henry McInerney. The author also wishes to thank two folks from the Annunciation Church office, Tammy Schneider and Lois Liuzza, for their gracious help.)

(Continued from p. 4)

Hurricane Katrina, new residents moved to the area seeking a quieter and more peaceful life. In effect, Kiln is "home" to people with deep roots there as well as to new residents seeking to plant deep roots for their future generations.

SOURCES:

- Haas, Norton. "History of Kiln Community." HCHS vertical file.
 Howard, Joan Porbes. "Early Kiln." *The Historian of Hancock County*. November 1995.
 Scharff, Robert G. *Louisiana's Loss, Mississippi's Gain*. Lawrenceville, VA: Brunswick Publishing Corp., 1999.



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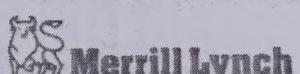
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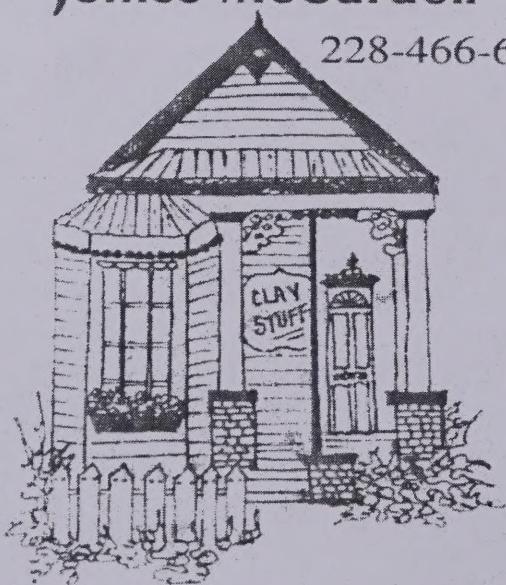
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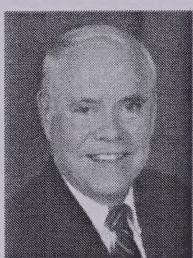
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